Dear Sam and, 9/20/90

You close you letter of the 18th with a prayer for a healthy and peaceful new year, in which we join and would extend to the entire world.

You also ask about the current JFK assassination exploitations. It happens that as the best known one in Texas is questioned, with which I've had something to do, the unscrupulous and not particularly bright exploiters are driven to new and sillier extremes that may be of interest. There appears to have been a schism between widow and son, with the widow saying that if the son does not get his cart rolling she'll hitch up her own. Reportedly he then assaulted her, being the exemplary kind of human who enobles a father's memory as he has. Today she and her faction of the greedy ones held a new conference in Houston, where Joe West, who says he is a legal investigator, has his office and thus could benefit from the publicity. I understand it was a real fiasco.

Ricky, the son, is not able to produce his father's alleged diary that is the alleged confession. So the mother produced hers. It is dated 1958 and is hand-printed, not written, with a felt-tipped pen. Which had not been invented by 1958. From there on it went downhill and I'm not going to repeat those of the particulars reported to me save one. John Stockwell, who'd been in the CIA and quit to write a fine book exposing its awful record and policies in Africa, had been involved in this, apparently through the Dallas JFK assassination information center. I understand that he has had some kind of association with Bud Fensterwald, who is behind that center and one of his own in DC. Initially he had publicly supported the Ricky White fabrication but he had wised up a bit and as late as yesterday had been trying to get West and the widow to cancel their this morning's new conference. When they went ahead he was there, got up and denounced them as fakers, and walked out, taking some of the press with him. I understand that the press was divided: some laughed and some, feeling imposed upon, were angry. So, it is gradually coming apart and with it whatever there was of the Dallas JFK assassination information center. Meanwhile, to add a nice touch, West was served, at his own news conference, with the paper of a five million dollar suit filed against him by MATSU, the organization of oil men who paid Ricky $100,000 and a salary for a 25% interest in his take. They claim he stole Ricky's alleged cables left by his father, which are stupid and incompetent inventions.

This morning I finished Howard Fast's The Pledge. In part it comes from his own experience with the House UnAmericans, which resulted in his going to jail for a year for refusing to name names. He may draw on the experiences of others. It is an excellent novel and I reacted to it from its quality and from my own experiences, so I wrote him, without stopping to organize my thoughts. On the chance that I said some things I'd not said earlier I enclose a copy. I did not go into all that would have been relevant and I'm sure I forgot what would have been informative because it was a spur of the moment letter that may or may not serve a purpose. I do recommend the book to you if you can get it either at a library or as a remainder. I saw it at a low price next to the Kmart pharmacy when I left a prescription Monday.

I did not have lenghty correspondence with any of the Hollywood Ten and the longest was with Alvah Bessie. It troubled me that such sophisticated men were so naive, so high in the clouds of unreality, from deeply-felt and held principle. They decided to restict their Constitutional claim to the First Amendment. They ignored the climate of the time and the consequences on others in deciding not to invoke any other Constitutional amendment. They thus were convicted when they would have been acquitted and their added fuel to the cold war and to the rampant anti-Americanism in the highest places.

In some ways I was better off than they because the committee asked me no question I did not answer and I'd not been asked to name names. But in some ways I was worse off because they had had a special law passed to "get" me and had enormous pressure to enforce it and get me indicted. While I did not sacrifice principle I also fought as hard as I could and they went to jail and I didn t and I struck a blow against the bastards. If it had not been that Lil learned what they were up to, preparing me to fight correctly, like Fast and the Ten I'd have gone to jail, too. But I was prepared, as I say in the letter, because I started to fight back immediately. The best ~~pissble~~ possible year to you all,

Harold